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Saturday, 13 February 2021

Vice-Senior General Soe Win attends 74th Union Day celebrations in Nay Pyi Taw

Vice-Chairman of State Administration Council and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win took part in the celebrations of 74th anniversary of Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Union Day message from the Chairman of State Administration Council and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was read by Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the flag-hoisting and saluting ceremonies held in front of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall.

The 74th Union Day was organized this year with the objectives: To work on the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved; Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic nationals; To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union; All ethnic nationals to work for the preservation and protection of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national

unity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty; To nurture and develop new generations endowed with high skills and capabilities imbued with strong Union spirit.

The flag-hoisting and saluting ceremonies took place at 5:30 am in the presence of ethnic national people, civil service personnel, members of civil society organizations and invited guests, together with the ceremonial Honour Guard Troop.

The ceremonies were also attended by Union Ministers, Union Attorney-General, Auditor-General of the Union, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman, senior Tatmadaw officers, judges of Supreme Court of the Union, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, deputy ministers, members of Union Civil Service Board, members of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, members of Anti-Corruption Commission, Nay Pyi Taw Council members, departmental heads, ministerial staff, ethnic cultural troupes, and representatives of ethnic groups.— MNA/GNLM



Vice-Senior General Soe Win reads the Union Day message from State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**



The 74th Anniversary Union Day Celebrations are seen in progress in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No (61/2021)
1st Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
12 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Minister

U Min Htein is appointed by the State Administration Council as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Construction in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

By order
Sd/
Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No (62/2021)
1st Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
12 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of Region/
State Administration Council Members

The Region/State Administration Council members are assigned to the duties of region/state Security and Border Affairs Ministers by the State Administration Council in accordance with Section 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The following senior military officers are appointed as the members of Region/State Administration Councils.

1. BC 29197 Colonel Kyaw Lin Aung

2. BC 22000 Colonel Myint Wai

3. BC 22617 Colonel Myo Min Naung

4. BC 25995 Colonel Han Win Aung

5. BC 24993 Colonel Win Tin Soe

6. BC 26934 Colonel Kyaw Ze Ya

7. BC 27294 Colonel Hla Myo Shwe

8. BC 20825 Colonel Min Oo

9. BC 26109 Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Min

10. BC 26939 Colonel Nay Htut Oo

11. BC 23158 Colonel Min Than

12. BC 21897 Colonel Win Tint

13. BC 26759 Colonel Hla Oo

14. BC 25130 Colonel Kyaw Swar Hlaing

Kachin State

Kayah State

Kayin State

Chin State

Sagaing Region

Taninthayi Region

Bago Region

Magway Region

Mandalay Region

Mon State

Rakhine State

Yangon Region

Shan State

Ayeyawady Region

By order
Sd/
Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No (63/2021)
1st Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
12 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Nay Pyi Taw Council Member

BC 21111 Colonel Min Naung is assigned to the duties of Nay Pyi Taw Council Security and Border Affairs Minister and appointed as the member of Nay Pyi Taw Council in accordance with Section 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

By order
Sd/
Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

State Administration Council’s Notification to Public

SOME persons who are making various disturbances to the nation are putting different forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel not to be able to serve the country well. Such activities are against the laws and the principles of personal rights and freedom. Some common people who are not civil service personnel are performing such actions. It is required to recognize others’ rights and freedom in practising own rights and freedom. Moreover, it is also required to abide by the restrictions in laws for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity of the public. Therefore, for receiving legal assistance and taking legal actions against those who make disturbances and harassment, the following phone numbers and e-mail addresses can be contacted.

Phone numbers and e-mail address for respective areas

| Sr | Region/State | Phone No | e-mail addresses |
|----|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Nay Pyi Taw | 067 550251 067 550252 067 550253 067 550254 067 550255 | mpf-naypyitaw@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 2 | Kachin State | 074 252 6671 074 252 6672 | mpf-kachin@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 3 | Kayah State | 083 222 4315 083 222 4316 | mpf-kayar@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 4 | Kayin State | 058 2021096 058 2021009 | mpf-kayin@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 5 | Chin State | 070 2022111 070 2022333 | mpf-chin@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 6 | Sagaing Region | 071 2026253 071 2026254 | mpf-sagaing@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 7 | Taninthayi Region | 059 2024029 059 2024030 | mpf-tanintharyi@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 8 | Bago Region | 052 2201920 052 2201921 | mpf-bago@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 9 | Magway Region | 063 2028855 063 2028856 | mpf-magway@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 10 | Mandalay Region | 02 4035891 02 4035892 02 4035893 02 4035894 02 4035895 | mpf-mandalay@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 11 | Mon State | 057 2027880 057 2027884 | mpf-mon@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 12 | Rakhine State | 043 2024557 043 2024558 | mpf-rakhine@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 13 | Yangon Region | 01 8300011 01 8300012 01 8300013 01 8300014 01 8300015 | mpf-yangon@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 14 | Shan State | 081 202241 081 202242 | mpf-shan@e-moha.gov.mm |
| 15 | Ayeyawady Region | 042 2023103 042 2023106 | mpf-ayeyarwaddy@e-moha.gov.mm |

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (**phone number 2019**) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8 April 2020.—MNA

It is advised to follow the pragmatic figures, rather than emotion

The voter lists of UEC were also inconsistent. Its announcement on 25 July 2020 mentioned the number of eligible voters was 37,572,521 (over 37.5 million), 38,529,198 (over 38.5 million) on 2 October. After the elections, the reports of township election sub-commissions to township Immigration and Population offices have shown the 39,277,214 (over 39.2 million), eligible voters. The different figures were to be reconsidered. According to the population theory based on the actual number of people in the 2014 census, the number of persons with 18-year old and above on 1 October 2020 was estimated at 36,963,659 (over 36.9 million). However, the number of eligible voter lists announced by the UEC after the elections were 39.2 million. It was 5.4 million persons more than the figures of immigration and population ministry in October 2020, and over 2.3 million persons more than the estimated figures from the population calculating technology. These are pragmatic situations. It is advised to follow the pragmatic figures, rather than emotion if we have a genuine desire for disciplined democracy and development of the country.

(Excerpt from the speech to the public made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 9 February 2021)

Vice-Senior General Soe Win attends 74th Union Day celebrations in Nay Pyi Taw

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The 74th Anniversary Union Day Celebrations are seen in progress in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 February 2021. PHOTO: MNA

Yangon organizes 74th Union Day flag-hoisting Ceremony

THE Flag-hoisting Ceremony to mark the 74th anniversary of Union Day 2021 was conducted at People's Park on Pyay Road of Yangon yesterday. The ceremony was attended by

Yangon Region Administration Council Chairman U Hla Soe, Commander of Yangon Region Command Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe, departmental officials, ethnic representatives and invited guests.

Yangon Region Administration Council Chairman U Hla Soe saluted the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Flag together with the attendees to the military parade ceremony.

Then, he read out the message sent by State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for the 74th Union Day and the ceremony was concluded.—MNA/GNLM



Pilgrims in Yangon. PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES

Pilgrims make meritorious deeds at pagodas

THE pagodas across the nation have reopened to public starting 8 February in accordance with the COVID-19 regulations.

Meanwhile, the pilgrims and visitors including monks and nuns peacefully visited the Shwedagon Pagoda of Yangon Region, Maha Muni Pagoda of Mandalay Region and Uppassanti Pagoda of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and other pagodas of regions and states according to the COVID-19 health rules yesterday.

The daily visiting hours of Shwedagon pagoda are 6am-7am, 8 am-9 am and 10 am-11 am in the morning followed by 1 pm-2 pm, 3 pm-4 pm and 5 pm-6 pm in the afternoon, according to the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services statement. –MNA

Military personnel pay homage, donate offertories to Buddhist monks

LT-GEN AUNG ZAW AYE from the Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services (Army), accompanied by Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung and other officials paid homage to Rector Sayadaw Dr Dhammasami (Oxford Sayadaw) of Shan State Buddha University in Phaya Phyu Ward of Taunggyi in Shan State (South) yesterday.

Lt-Gen Aung Zaw Aye and members first took five precepts from the Sayadaw and donated the offertories.

The military personnel also went around the Buddhist scriptures library in the university compound.

Lt-Gen Aung Zaw Aye and members then visited Thein Taung Pariyatti Monastery located in Chan Thar Ward and paid homage to residing Sayadaw Agga Maha Ganthavacaka Bhaddanta Tejavanta.

The military officers donated the offertories to the Sayadaw, according to Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. —MNA



The Oxford Sayadaw is receiving the offertories in Taunggyi on 12 February 2021. PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES

State Administration Council's Announcement

Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Contact phone numbers | -067 412 168 -067 412 222 | -067 412 246 -067 412 387 | -067 412 388 -067 412 444 | -067 412 598 -067 412 066 | -067 412 539 -067 412 540 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|

Mandalay Region Administration Council's Announcement to Public

Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Contact phone numbers | -02 403 9635 -02 403 7199 | -02 403 6869 -02 403 6978 | -09 797 144 144 -09 694 740 311 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|

74th Union Day celebrated in Pathein

A ceremony to mark the 74th Union Day was organized at Kanthayar Pyidaungsu Field in Pathein yesterday in accordance with COVID-19 health rules and attended by Region Administration Council Chairman U Ye Myint, Commander of Western Command, military personnel, region administration council members, secretary, departmental officials and invited guests.

The message sent by State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for the 74th Union Day was read out and the ceremony was concluded.—IPRD/GNLM



Demonstrations supporting the Tatmadaw are seen in various townships. **PHOTO:MNA**

Thousands show their support to Tatmadaw

TATMADAW supporters staged demonstrations across the nation to show their support for the Tatmadaw in serving duties in accordance with the 2008 Constitution.

About 800 Tatmadaw supporters marched in Kyunsu of Taninthayi Region yesterday while 10,000 in Meiktila, 3,000 in Mahlaing and 2,000 in Pyaw-bwe of Mandalay Region, 3,000 in Htantabin, 200 in Kyaukgyi, 3,000 in Thayawady, 500 in Monyo, 3,000 in Pyu and 400 in Mone of

Bago Region.

The Tatmadaw supporters also shouted slogans and held posters like “We welcome Tatmadaw for doing in line with 2008 Constitution. We welcome the new State Administration Council established by Tatmadaw under the law and newly formed UEC. We don’t want external elements acting as stooges and traitors to national affairs. May Myanmar be peaceful. We don’t want election results that do not conform to the law. We welcome

Tatmadaw that protect race and religion. Enemies are the ones who make dissension between Tatmadaw and people. And we welcome the Tatmadaw that implements genuine and disciplined democracy.

The people will keep demonstrating to show their support for forming a new election commission by Tatmadaw after forming the State Administration Council in accordance with the 2008 Constitution to check the voting frauds. — MNA/GNLM

Local inmates, foreigners released from prisons, jails of regions, states under State Pardon Order



A total of 128 inmates— 119 males and 9 females— were released from Dawei prison on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO:DAWEI DISTRICT IPRD**



925 male citizen inmates, 5 male foreign inmates, totally 930, and 215 female citizen inmates and 2 female foreign inmates, totally 217, were released from Central Prison (Mandalay) on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO:MNA**



A total of 91 inmates— 84 males and 7 females— were released from Maubin prison on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO: AUNG KHINE (MAUBIN)**



413 prisoners-- 341 males and 72 females-- from Myeik prison, and 189 inmates from Kyaukphyutaung labour camps under the Correction Department, totally 602 persons, were released from prison on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO:MYEIK DISTRICT (IPRD)**



A total of 52 male and female inmates were released from the jail in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**



A total of 249 inmates— 218 males and 31 females—, including 1 foreigner were released from Sittway prison on 12 February 2021. **PHOTO: TIN TUN (IPRD)**

WHILE the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is establishing a new democratic State with peace, development and disciplines, to maintain friendly relations with other countries and to create the humanitarian and compassionate grounds, the State Administration Council,

issued orders 59/2021 and 60/2021 to release 23,314 local inmates and 55 foreigners from the respective prisons and jails on 12 February.

As per the Code of Criminal Procedure Article 401 (1), the local inmates have to sign their pledges upon

the conditions ‘to serve the new punishment together with the remaining punishment to which he/she was sentenced this time, if more offence is committed,’ while the foreign prisoners were deported to their respective countries.—Tin Tun (IPRD)/ GNLM

Civilian doctors join military hospitals



MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states provide medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services and civilian doctors were joining the medical services yesterday.

A total of 6,242 outpatients and 2,693 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses conducted 264 major operations and 135 minor operations, and the serious cases are treated by the senior doctors. These hospitals managed for the birth of 391 babies, while 391 pregnant women were taken to the respective military hospitals.

Officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods, according to the report of the Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. —MNA (GNLM)

Relevant regional command commander is seen comforting the local patient. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

Protesters attack security forces in Mawlamyine

AUTHORITIES have issued Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure that prohibits assembly of five or more persons, to ensure the rule of law, peace and stability of the public and to prevent violence.

However, police forces and local authorities arrested protesters after they encountered about 200 local protesters led by Nyo Min (Son of U Htay Win) and Tun Nyein Oo (Son of U Tun Lwin) in front of the Mawlamyine University around 11:20 am yesterday.

Officials reminded them about Section 144. However, they resisted and failed to disperse the crowd, shouting slogans and conducting violent acts.

Security forces arrested Nyo Min and Tun Nyein Oo and discussed with the rector and other officials at Mawlamyine University.

Moreover, the protesters did not disperse themselves and used hand-made weapons, throwing stones at the police.

The security forces fired 10 rubber bullets as the warning shots, but it failed to disperse the crowd and the protesters and then the police had to withdraw their forces.

In the clashes, some police members were injured, while some items of people were damaged as the Myanmar Police Force is taking security measures round the clock, according to the report of Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. —MNA/GNLM



One of the injured police members is seen undergoing the treatments. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

Tatmadaw True News Information Team: Healthcare services offered at military hospitals

THE Tatmadaw True News Information Team released a statement on 4 February 2021 that healthcare services are offered to all the national people at the military hospitals.

The statement said that some persons who are creating disturbances, aiming to destabilize the administrative mechanism and stability of the State, have incited Civil Disobedience Campaign through social networks, causing failure to perform duties among the health workers.

Doctors have vowed during their convocation that “ Health and well-being of the patients will be our own issues as the first priority ; I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity and in accordance with a good medical practice; I will serve my medical profession regardless of nationality, race and social status; and I will maintain the utmost respect for human life”.

It is also advised all the health workers not to follow the incitement that can jeopardize the interest of country and people, and keep their professional vows to the public.

The Tatmadaw has received the permission of the State Administration Council to solve the current healthcare problems of people across the nation by the military medics.

Therefore, people can get proper medical treatments at the nearest military hospitals.—MNA

Experimental cultivation of India drumstick species succeeds

THE LOCAL farmers from Kyaukpadaung township, Mandalay region grew the drumstick, an India species, on a trial basis in their villages and their cultivation has succeeded, said Daw Htay Kyi, a local grower from Kyaukpadaung.

Therefore, the local farmers from other villages are now interested in growing India drumstick species, she added.

The local farmers from Kyaukpadaung township are planning to grow the India drumstick species on a commercial scale. They have already cultivated one acre of India drumstick species MPK1 on a trial basis. Their drumstick cultivation has now met with success.

The seeds of India drumstick species are sold for K100 per seed in Thanbyar Chaung village, Yesagyo township. Seeds are planted in one bag per seed. After three days of planting the seeds, the seeds begin to sprout. Then, the nurseries' plants could

be transplanted on the farmland after 18 days, said a drumstick grower named U Myo Min Ko.

The fruits, leaves and branches of India drumstick species are produced as value-added products, which are highly demanded from foreign countries such as Japan, Singapore and India. However, domestic agricultural production is still on a small scale. The India drumsticks are sold for K200 per one, according to the drumstick growers.

The farmers from Thanbyar Chaung village, Yesagyo township are selling the drumsticks for K2,500 per viss if they are India species and K500 for smaller pieces.

The drumsticks can bear fruits three times per year. Each time, we cut the leaves and branches of the drumstick trees and dry them all. After that, we are selling them in the market. Most of the villagers are growing the drumstick on a commercial



The farmers from Thanbyar Chaung village, Yesagyo township are selling the drumsticks for K2,500 per viss if they are India species and K500 for smaller pieces. **PHOTO: KO HTEIN (KPD)**

scale. Wundwin and Yesagyo townships. Among them, Kyaukpadaung township has seen successful cultivation of India drumstick species. — Ko Htein (KPD)/GNLM

Myanmar maize export to Thai hits 100,000 tonnes in 10 days

MYANMAR'S maize export to Thailand via Myawady border trade zone hit about 100,000 tons in 10 days.

Maize, one of Myanmar's

agricultural products, could be exported to Mae Sot, Thailand through Myawady border checkpoint with Form-D attached between 1 February and 31 Au-

gust. So, a total of 445 Form-Ds have already been issued from 1 February to 9 February 2021 and Myanmar earned US\$30,62 million from the export of 99,637.37

tonnes of maize.

Thailand imposed a hefty tax on imported goods during its corn season to protect its growers' interest. It grants tax exemption for corn import between February and August. For the rest of the time, Thailand will impose 73 per cent of tax on corn import as per the notification submitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Thailand annually imports to around 5 million tonnes of corn from foreign countries.

The local maize consumption in Myanmar is also higher than that in the previous year. This year, the association targeted to export 1.6 million tonnes of corn, according to the Myanmar Corn Industrial Association (MCIA).

At present, Myanmar's corn export is heavily relying on bor-

der trade. The country mainly sends the corn to the neighbouring countries like China, Laos and Thailand. Corn is also shipped to Singapore, Malaysia and Viet Nam through sea trade.

Myanmar exported over 2.2 million tonnes of corn to the foreign market in the past FY2019-2020, with an estimated value of over \$360 million, according to the data of the Ministry of Commerce.

Currently, corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. There are about 1.12 million acres of corn in Myanmar, and it has three corn seasons — winter, summer and monsoon.

The country produces 2.5-3 million tonnes of corn annually. —NN/GNLM



The country mainly sends the corn to the neighbouring countries like China, Laos and Thailand. Corn is also shipped to Singapore, Malaysia and Viet Nam through sea trade.

Request to health workers

1. It is appreciated for the strenuous efforts of the medical doctors, nurses, medical experts and other health works at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports at the front-line in the fight against prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
2. As the vaccination programme of COVID-19 is being conducted for the public and the real-time healthcare services are required for the people, all the staff members at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports are strongly urged to return to their duties with taking the well-being of patients into consideration.

Ministry of Health and Sports
8 February 2021

Act now to make better management of climate change-induced health risks

Surface air temperatures over land have increased by around 1.5 degrees Celsius in the last 150 years, leading to adverse impacts on human health and well-being. Further warming will magnify these risks, depending on the extent of emissions reduction and investment in building climate-resilient health systems.

Magway Region located in the arid zone has suffered 1,865 natural disasters in five years from 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

In the past five years, a total of 580,214 locals from the Magway Region have suffered great woes from the outbreaks of fire, flood, hurricane and tornado, landslide, earthquakes, lightning and other geological processes.

The recent unseasonal rain and hailstones in central Myanmar and eastern Shan State have alerted our country that our country is one of the countries in Asia which is particularly vulnerable due to increased exposure to the consequences of climate change.

Weather experts predict that Myanmar would see less rain than average in the coming years, along with higher temperatures. Due to this situation, rural areas are likely to experience shortages of drinking water.

Weather experts predict that Myanmar would see less rain than average in the coming years, along with higher temperatures. Due to this situation, rural areas are likely to experience shortages of drinking water.

Increased atmospheric carbon dioxide levels can lower the nutritional quality of crops. More frequent extreme weather events will also disrupt supply chains. With cereal prices projected to increase by 2050, the region's most vulnerable people face food insecurity and hunger. Our Southeast Asia region has already seen an increase of stunting in children.

Under most scenarios, rising temperatures will expose large populations to health-damaging heat waves throughout Asia. Risks will be especially severe in densely populated cities and agricultural areas of South Asia and eastern China. Higher average temperatures reduce productivity of outdoor workers, and can also adversely affect maternal and child health.

Some countries in Asia has implemented successful heat action plans.

These need to be regularly reviewed as the onset, severity and duration of dangerously high temperatures change.

We cannot prevent natural disasters, but we can reduce the impacts from them through our being properly prepared.

This requires well-coordinated, multisectoral actions with the active participation of individuals and communities at risk.

■ ■ ■

'Constellation' of post-COVID symptoms will impact global healthcare, says WHO

Far more research is needed into the "constellation" of sometimes debilitating symptoms among people who've recovered from COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday, adding that it "will impact" global health systems.

"We know that this post-COVID-19 condition - or as some patients also call it 'long COVID' - is a heterogenous group of symptoms that occur after the acute illness", said Dr Janet Diaz, Team Lead, Health Care Readiness at WHO. "So, these are symptoms or complications that can happen potentially a month after, three months after, or even six months after, and as we are learning more, we are trying to understand the real duration of this condition."

Mental and physical ills are 'real'

Citing reported symptoms such as neurological and physical illness, Dr Diaz noted that an unspecified number of sufferers had been unable to return to work, once they had recovered from the acute sickness caused by the new coronavirus. "We are concerned

obviously with the numbers of patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 virus that the numbers...just by the magnitude of the pandemic, will impact health systems."

Although comprehensive data on the condition is not yet available, the WHO official insisted that "these (symptoms) were real". "Some of the "more common" ailments were "fatigue, exhaustion and post-exertional malaise, cognitive dysfunction", along with what some patients called "brain fog", Dr Diaz said, describing a "constellation of symptoms".

Complications

Further research is also needed to drill down into how many COVID-19 sufferers who did not require intensive care unit (ICU) treatment still went on to develop the condition. "What we know this far is that patients experiencing (a) post-COVID-19 condition could have been hospitalized patients,

those in the ICU. So, we do know that has happened in patients who are very sick, but also in patients who were not managed inside the hospital...they have had complications and they have had persistent symptoms or new symptoms...or symptoms that waxed and waned, that came and went after their acute illness." To promote a better understanding of post-COVID sickness and support patient care and public health interventions, the WHO has called on clinicians and patients to report data on symptoms to the Organization's Clinical Platform. The case report form - which is available in multiple languages - has been designed to report standardized clinical data from individuals after they have left hospital or after recovering from acute illness. "What we don't know is why it's happening, so what is the pathophysiology...of this condition...the researchers are really working hard to get to



As the world's largest vaccine producer, India is set to be at the forefront of supplying affordable shots against COVID-19 to low- and middle-income countries. PHOTO: SAJJAD HUSSAIN/AFP

the answers of these questions," Dr Diaz said.

Vaccine deal inked

In a related development, UN Children's Fund UNICEF announced on Friday a deal to distribute the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, potentially before the end of March.

The agreement is on behalf of the COVAX platform, primarily

for developing nations, set up by the WHO, The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. "This supply agreement allows UNICEF to procure up to 40 million doses that have been secured under the COVAX Facility's Advance Purchase Agreement with Pfizer/BioNTech to be available throughout 2021", the UN agency said in a statement.

Emergency use approved

The Pfizer-BioNTech jab was the first to receive WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL) on 31 December 2020. It requires ultra-cold chain storage facilities which UNICEF has secured with partners to support governments in their roll-out of a variety of COVID-19 vaccines, it said.

SOURCE: AFP
■ ■ ■

IEA says oil market fragile, cites virus restrictions

The International Energy Agency warned Thursday the world oil market remains fragile, despite a recent recovery in prices, as tighter restrictions are imposed to curb more contagious coronavirus variants.

At the same time, the IEA said the economic outlook was brighter overall, especially in the second half of this year.

"The rebalancing of the oil market remains fragile in the early part of 2021 as measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, with its more contagious variants, weigh heavily on the near-term recovery in global oil demand," the IEA said in its latest monthly report.

Fresh support

"But fresh support has been provided by a more positive economic outlook for the second half of the year, along with a pledge from OPEC+ to hasten the drawdown of surplus oil in-

ventories," it added.

OPEC producers plus their non-cartel allies, principally Russia, have stuck to hard-won output limits, driving prices back to around \$60 per barrel, levels last seen early last year before the pandemic took hold.

The IEA noted that in January, the International Monetary Fund had raised its global growth forecast for this year to 5.5 per cent from 5.2 per cent, largely due to "the robust recovery in manufacturing activity and stronger growth expectations for the United States."

In Europe, however, the outlook was weaker, it noted.

"Renewed lockdowns, stringent mobility restrictions and a rather slow vaccine rollout in



Iraqi laborers work at an oil refinery in the southern town Nassiriya. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Europe have delayed the anticipated rebound until the second half of the year," it said.

The IEA said it had left its 2021 global oil demand forecast unchanged, at 96.4 million barrels per day (mbd), which represents a gain of 5.4 mbd over 2020.

Forecasts for economic and oil demand

It added however that "the forecasts for economic and oil demand growth are highly dependent on progress in distributing and administering vaccines, and the easing of travel restrictions in the world's major economies."

SOURCE: Agence France Presse

Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 12th February, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 13th February, 2021: Weather will be generally fair in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Shan(North & East)State and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain or thundershowers in Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th February, 2021: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th February, 2021: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 13th February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon Region and generally fair in Naypyitaw, Mandalay Region.

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Germany to close borders to Czech regions, Austria's Tyrol over virus: minister

GERMANY will ban travel from Czech border regions as well as Austria's Tyrol over a troubling surge in infections of more contagious coronavirus variants, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said Thursday.

"The states of Bavaria and Saxony today asked the government to class Tyrol and the border regions of the Czech Republic as virus mutation areas, and to implement border controls," Seehofer told the Sueddeutsche newspaper.

"That has been agreed with the (German) chancellor and the vice-chancellor," he said, adding that the new curbs will begin on Sunday. Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder had warned late Wednesday that if the Czech Republic was unable to take ap-



Markus Soeder with Angela Merkel in 2020. PHOTO: AFP

propriate measures to curb contagion, then a "border closure must also be an issue".

Germany in late January banned most travellers from countries classed as so-called mutation areas or places hard-

est hit by new, more contagious coronavirus variants.

Only a handful of exceptions are allowed to enter Germany from these countries, including returning Germans and essential workers.—AFP ■

Infantino says Covid measures could still be in place for 2022 World Cup



FIFA chief Gianni Infantino gestures during an interview in the Qatari capital Doha. PHOTO: AFP

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said for the first time Thursday coronavirus containment measures could still be in place during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar but he insisted stadiums would be full.

In an interview with AFP ahead of the Club World Cup final he also suggested FIFA could "concretely" help travelling fans from countries where vaccine rollout has been slow or had not yet begun. "Maybe some

precautionary measures have to be taken," he said in the Qatari capital Doha. Infantino backed the Qatari hosts who in recent days have insisted the 2022 spectacle would go ahead with stadiums at 100 percent capacity, and he raised the prospect of FIFA assisting fans with vaccine requirements.

"If certain countries have difficulties accessing vaccines, in spite of the efforts of the World Health Organization... then we could certainly envisage helping them concretely with some projects targeting World Cup situations," he said. "But two years from now I believe that, and I hope sincerely, that everyone who would like to be vaccinated will be vaccinated."—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vaccinations for Singaporean elderly start 22 February

SINGAPORE is opening its Covid-19 vaccination programme to senior citizens from 22 February, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Friday.

Vaccinations have already begun in some pilot towns, which have a higher proportion of elderly residents. The schedule of vaccinations for over-70s across Singapore is expected to be announced in the coming days.

Prime Minister Lee stated his aim for the whole country to be vaccinated by the end of 2021 at the latest, telling local reporters "I am reasonably confident that we will get the vaccines that we need this year."—AFP ■

Czech PM visits Hungary to seek info on pandemic approach

CZECH Prime Minister Andrej Babis visited Hungary on the 5th of February and Serbia on the 10th. The purpose of the Hungarian trip was to meet with a Hungarian PM Viktor Orban to seek information about the Russian covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V and how to get it even though it has not yet passed through the validation process of the European Medicines Agency.

Hungary has received 40,000 doses of Sputnik V last Tuesday. Other than that, the PMs talked about covid-19 government measures and their enforceability, and Hungary's experience with the Eli Lilly covid-19 cure (Czechia is due to receive first 500 doses in February).

The cure is lowering the amount of the virus in a body and prevents falling into tough stages of the illness. Andrej Babis and his team of experts also met with Hungarian Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Health and State.—AFP ■

Vaccine doses should be no more than six weeks apart

PROFESSOR UGUR SAHIN, Chief Executive of German pharmaceutical firm BioNTech, told Sky News that long delays in giving second doses of the vaccine was not recommended.

The professor, whose firm has produced one of the vaccines currently approved in Europe in collaboration with Pfizer, said that "as a scientist, I wouldn't mind if the second dose of the vaccine is given three weeks, four weeks, maybe five weeks, even up to six weeks might still be okay."

In contrast, the UK allows second doses of the vaccine to be delayed up to 12 weeks after the initial jab has been administered. Sahin continued, "I wouldn't delay that further. As a scientist I believe that it is not good to go longer than six weeks."—AFP ■

Berlin film festival to spotlight pandemic-era movies

BERLIN'S international film festival next month will feature 15 movies made under the pandemic in competition for its Golden Bear top prize, organizers said Thursday. Directors including Emmy winner Maria Schrader ("Unorthodox"), German-Spanish actor Daniel Bruehl ("Rush") and French director Celine Sciamma ("Portrait of a Lady on Fire") will be premiering new work at the event, which will take place online because of Germany's partial lockdown.

The Berlinale's artistic director, Carlo Chatrjian, said all contenders for the top prizes at the March 1-5 event were "films that either in their production or their post-production process have endured the pandemic." "If only a few of them show directly the new world we are living in, all of them carry beneath

their surfaces the uncertain times we are experiencing," he said in a video presenting the lineup.

"A sense of apprehension is everywhere."

Schrader will unveil "I'm Your Man", a sci-fi comedy about a woman played by Sandra Hueller ("Toni Erdmann") finding a custom-made Mr Right.

Bruehl, who came to international attention with the bittersweet comedy "Good Bye, Lenin" and is now part of the Captain America franchise, will make his directorial debut with "Next Door" about gentrification in Berlin.

Sciamma, who scooped the best screenplay award in Cannes with her critical smash hit "Portrait of a Lady on Fire", has completed "Petite Maman" starring two young girls.—AFP ■



The Berlinale, now in its 71st edition, is the first major European cinema showcase of the year and ranks with Cannes and Venice among the continent's top film festivals. PHOTO: AFP

Biden facing 'serious dilemmas' on Afghan troop withdrawal: US official

US President Joe Biden faces "serious dilemmas" in Afghanistan as a deadline to withdraw troops nears and the Taliban show no sign of ending their bloodshed, a top US official warned.

The new US leader has ordered a review of the deal Washington cut with the Taliban last year, which promised the withdrawal of all foreign forces by May 1 in return for security guarantees from the militants and a commitment to peace talks with the Afghan government.

The talks are progressing painfully slowly, but scarcely a day goes by without a bomb blast, attack on government forces, or a targeted assassination somewhere in the country.

"Violence level remains



Scarcely a day goes by without a bomb blast, attack on government forces, or targeted assassination somewhere in Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

very, very high... which is shocking and deeply disappointing," a senior US State Department official told AFP this week on condition of anonymity.— AFP ■

Under cloud of pandemic, Spain's Catalonia to hold key vote

MORE than three years after a failed bid to break away from Spain, Catalonia goes to the polls Sunday for an election that Madrid hopes will unseat the region's ruling separatists.

But Sunday's vote could see a high level of abstentions as Spain battles a third wave of the pandemic, with regional authorities ramping up restrictions to slow soaring case numbers after the Christmas holidays.

And in a highly-controversial move, people with the virus as well as those in quarantine will have the right to cast their ballots in person in the last hour before voting closes at 1900 GMT in the wealthy northeastern region, home to 7.8 million people.



Pandemic conditions could cause large numbers of Catalans to shun polling stations. **PHOTO: AFP**

Of the 82,000 people who have been asked to help staff polling stations on the day, nearly 31,000 have asked to be recused, despite pledges they will receive full protective suits.

One is Rodrigo Sanchez, a 53-year-old banker whose wife has cancer and was due to go for a chemotherapy session just three days before the vote.

The doctors "told us it wasn't a good idea that someone who lives with a sick person be exposed for so many hours" to "a situation of potential infection", he told AFP.

The electoral authorities turned his request down but Rodrigo is thinking of just not turning up, even if that exposes him to legal penalties.

"You have to decide what's more important -- the money or your life ... But my wife's life comes before everything," he said.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump lawyers primed for rapid defence case in impeachment trial

LAWYERS for Donald Trump expect to take just a few hours Friday to argue for acquittal in his impeachment trial, and President Joe Biden says he's "anxious" to see how Republicans will vote after searing testimony that the former president incited insurrection.

"I'm just anxious to see what my Republican friends do, if they stand up," Biden said at the White House.

So far, there is no sign that enough Republicans will join the Democrats to convict Trump, who retains heavy influence over the right wing of the party after leaving office.

Democratic impeachment managers rested their case Thursday after two days of often emotional presentations.— AFP ■

Far from the Mediterranean: African migrants cross the Americas

AHMED Kabeer fled his homeland of Sudan where he was tortured and traveled thousands of miles to find himself in a new hell: the ominous jungle that straddles Colombia and Panama.

Unlike hundreds of thousands of other African migrants that crowd into precarious boats and launch into the Mediterranean Sea hoping to reach Europe, Kabeer's aim is the United States.

"There is a route" through Latin America, said Kabeer, who has a huge scar on his left leg and walks with a limp.

Kabeer is one of 23 people from the other side of the world who -- along with hundreds of Haitians and Cubans -- are waiting in a camp to cross the daunting Darien Gap having fled war and poverty.

They are united by anxiety.

Following a forced pause due to the pandemic, the moment has come to cross the jungle corridor between Colombia and Panama that spans more than 250 kilometres (155 miles).— AFP ■

Kosovo anti-graft crusaders face old guard in snap poll

WITH promises to root out corruption, a new generation of Kosovo politicians is trying to break the old guard's hold on power in elections on Sunday that could usher in a new era.

Since declaring independence from Serbia 12 years ago, the former province has been plagued by political upheaval, economic woes and a drawn-out struggle to secure full global recognition of its statehood.

For most of this era, the reins have been firmly in the hands of former rebels who led the 1990s independence war against Serbia.

But their grip has been weakening in the face of public frustration with widespread poverty and graft in one of Europe's poorest economies.

A court in The Hague has also removed several top former guerrilla leaders from the scene -- including ex-president Hashim Thaci -- after arresting them last year on war crimes charges linked to the 1998-99 conflict. If they were once feted as independence heroes, Kosovo's political elite have now become the face of the social and economic ills plaguing the population of 1.8 million, where



Kosovo holds snap elections Sunday in which a new generation of politicians are vying against the old guard's hold on power. **PHOTO: AFP**

average salaries are around 500 euros (around \$600) a month and youth unemployment tops 50 per cent.— AFP ■

North Korea's Kim lambasts officials for economic 'defeatism'



Kim Jong Un was quoted Friday as slamming officials for their lack of "innovative viewpoint and clear tactics" at a top ruling party meeting. **PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP**

NORTH KOREAN leader Kim Jong Un has accused top officials of "self-protection and defeatism" and largely blamed them for the country's economic plight, state media reported Friday.

At a meeting of top cadres, state news agency KCNA said Kim had "sharply criticized" officials responsible for laying out plans for various sectors' growth this year, saying they did not reflect the "idea and policy" announced at January's Party Congress.

That Congress, the first of its kind in five years and only the

eighth in North Korea's history, set out a new economic plan.

But it also revealed the extent of the isolated country's financial woes, with Kim repeatedly apologizing for mistakes in economic management and saying the last five years had been the "worst" time.

Wrapping up the four-day meeting, Kim was quoted Friday as slamming officials for their lack of "innovative viewpoint and clear tactics" in solving those issues.

In one example of poor performance, he singled out agriculture officials who had set grain

production targets "irrespective of present situation where farming condition is unfavourable and the state is unable to supply enough farming materials", in an unusually candid account.

Other sectors were lambasted for "absurdly low" production quotas, with officials accused of "trying to find a breather and make pretence of doing work".

North Korea is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, which have made rapid progress under Kim.—AFP

Foreigners celebrate Chinese New Year in post-epidemic Wuhan

FRENCH doctor Philippe Klein has worked in central China's Wuhan for seven years, but this was his first year to celebrate the Spring Festival in the city.

Klein did not have an emotional connection with the locals in years past, but now everything has changed. "Maybe because of the pandemic, now I have more and more solidarity with Wuhan people," he said.

Klein raised his glass for a New Year's toast during a reunion dinner with his family, Italian professor Sara Platto and her son Matteo, Israeli blogger and entrepreneur Raz Galor, and their friends in Wuhan. This bittersweet moment marked the end of the group's six-day "adventure" to cele-

brate the Chinese New Year.

While immersing themselves in the exciting preparations for the coming Year of the Ox, the expats got the chance to experience the reignited spark of the city once hit hard by COVID-19.

FESTIVE VIBES

With red banners and lanterns hanging on every street, Platto and her son Matteo strolled along Hanjie Street to buy some new clothes for the new year. Meanwhile, Klein drove to the supermarket close to his home to pick up a bottle of wine and was accompanied by Wuhan local Zhong Weiwei, a construction worker who helped build Leishenshan Hospital, a makeshift structure designed to house COVID-19 patients.—Xinhua



Peng Zilong (L), a 30-year-old deliveryman, helps Italian professor Sara Platto buy decorations for the Spring Festival in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, Feb. 2, 2021. **PHOTO:XINHUA**

Covid endangers France's cherished lunch tradition

THE CORONAVIRUS crisis has already taken a heavy toll on the French way of life and now it's bringing unwanted change to the nation's eating habits -- by forcing workers to eat at their

desks.

Until the Covid-19 pandemic struck, triggering the closure of restaurants and cafes, a communal midday meal of several courses, perhaps with some

wine, was still a feature in the professional life of millions.

At lunchtimes everyday across the country, restaurants in city centres would be filled to capacity in what seems a vision from a vanished era.

But now taking lunch alone seated at a desk in front of a computer, long looked down on with pity as the preserve of the hard-pressed "Anglosaxon" worker and until now officially illegal, has been adopted en masse by French employees.

"In other cultures, it's a bit more everyone-for-themselves, but in France it's a moment to eat together, to take time out as a group, among colleagues," said Romain Passelande, who co-founded the Les Petites Tables website devoted to affordable lunching in Paris.—AFP



Until the Covid-19 pandemic struck, triggering the closure of restaurants and cafes, a communal midday meal of several courses, perhaps with some wine, was still a feature in the professional life of millions. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Palestinians hope vote boosts diplomatic strength: experts

A DEAL reached between Palestinian rivals Fatah and Hamas to hold elections is aimed at renewing confidence in Palestinian governance ahead of a diplomatic push and talks with Israel, experts said.

Joe Biden's election as US president motivated Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas of Fatah, to hold "serious" talks with Hamas, according to a Palestinian analyst.

Abbas's Palestinian Authority had cut ties with Donald Trump's administration, accusing it of bias towards Israel, and Abbas wants to renew the legitimacy of Palestinian institutions as he re-engages with Washington, said the analyst Ashraf Abu al-Houl.

In January, Abbas, whose Fatah party controls the Pal-

estinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, announced the dates for the first Palestinian elections in 15 years.

Hamas Islamists won a surprising landslide when Palestinians last went to the polls in 2006, in a result not recognized by Fatah and which sparked deadly clashes and left Palestinian politics divided.

Hamas has held power in Gaza since 2007, the year Israel imposed a blockade on the coastal enclave, while Fatah has retained control in the West Bank. At a meeting in Cairo this week, Fatah and Hamas agreed on ground rules for May 22 legislative polls and a July 31 presidential vote, seeking to avoid a repeat of damaging post-poll chaos.—AFP

Former European bank boss Draghi set to be Italy's new PM

With almost all the political parties behind him, Mario Draghi on Friday (Feb 12) entered the final straight in his bid to form a new government to lead Italy through the coronavirus pandemic.

The former European Central Bank chief, called in after the outgoing centre-left coalition collapsed, could visit President Sergio Mattarella as early as Friday to be officially named prime minister.

Draghi has spent the last nine days assembling a government of national unity to manage the deadly pandemic that hit Italy almost exactly one year



Draghi has spent the last nine days assembling a government of national unity. PHOTO: AFP

ago, triggering a deep recession.

After securing the support late on Thursday of the last key player, the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), Draghi has

almost all the main parties on board, from leftists to the far-right League.

"The Draghi government is born," headlined Rome-based daily Il Messaggero, while the

Corriere Della Sera added: "Draghi in the home stretch."

However, the 73-year-old economist has shown he is willing to take his time, and could yet take a few more days to finalise his cabinet.

Italy has high hopes for Draghi, dubbed Super Mario after vowing to do "whatever it takes" to save the euro single currency in the 2010s debt crisis.

Mattarella asked him to step in on Feb 3 after outgoing premier Giuseppe Conte resigned following weeks of political turmoil in his M5S-led coalition.—AFP

Despite pandemic, Norway economy shrinks 2.5 pct in 2020

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Norway's economy contracted 2.5 per cent in 2020, a historic setback but a limited one compared to many other countries, official data showed Friday.

The country even saw growth in its gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.9 per cent in the fourth quarter, according to Statistics Norway.

"Preliminary accounts show that the downturn in 2020 was somewhat lower than we feared when restrictions were at their peak in March and April," Pal Sletten, head of National Accounts at Statistics Norway, said in a statement.

"This is, however, still the largest annual downturn measured for the mainland economy since estimations began in 1970, and it is probably the greatest economic downturn since the Second World War," Sletten added.

The figures are better than those anticipated by the government and the Bank of Norway, and much better than those posted by other European countries.

On Friday, the UK reported a record 9.9 per cent contraction to GDP in 2020, while the eurozone has seen an average loss of 6.8 per cent.—AFP

UK economy shrinks record 9.9% in 2020 on virus 'shock'

Britain's economy shrank by a record 9.9 per cent last year on the fallout from the coronavirus, official data showed Friday, but a rapid vaccines rollout has boosted the outlook.

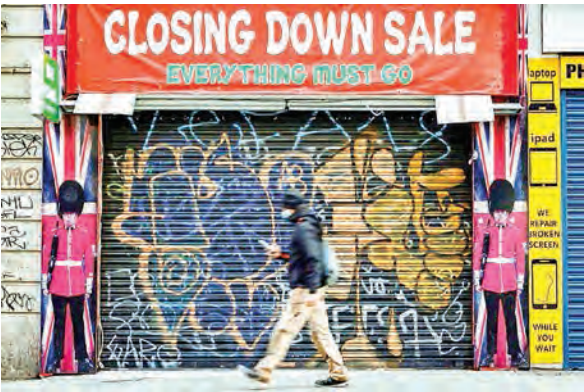
Finance minister Rishi Sunak said the economy had suffered a "serious shock" from the Covid-19 global health crisis, despite the data showing second-half growth. Activity was also hampered by Brexit turmoil ahead of Britain's final exit from the European Union at the end of last year.

"Over the year 2020 as a whole, GDP contracted by 9.9 per cent, marking the largest annual fall in UK GDP on record," the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Gross domestic product grew 1.0 per cent in the fourth quarter or three months to December, after an upwardly-revised third-quarter expansion of 16.1 per cent.

The economy plunged into a historic recession in the first half and shrank a record 19 per cent in the second quarter as the pandemic erupted.

Britain could still face a potential double-dip recession on the back of the latest lockdown that has been in place since January, but a vaccine-driven bounceback is widely forecast.—AFP



Covid-19 wreaked havoc on the British economy last year, putting thousands out of work and forcing the government to spend billions to offset a record downturn. PHOTO: AFP

Markets, oil drop in Asia but bitcoin edges towards \$50,000

Markets fell in Asia on Friday in holiday-thinned trade with investors awaiting developments in US stimulus talks, while bitcoin hit a new record as it crept towards \$50,000.

Oil prices also retreated from their 13-month highs after investors were given a reality check on expectations for demand this year, despite expectations the global economy will see a strong recovery.

Equities across the planet have rallied this year on the back of vaccine rollouts, falling infection and death rates, and optimism US President Joe

Biden will push through most of his \$1.9 trillion rescue package.

Hopes for his spending deal were given a boost Thursday by news that first-time claims for unemployment benefits fell less than estimated last week.

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq hit new records again, though the Dow was marginally lower.

With most of Asia closed for the Lunar New Year holiday, business was limited. Tokyo and Wellington were all in the red, while Sydney was also hit by news of snap lockdown in Melbourne.



Bitcoin continues to break records as it creeps towards \$50,000 but observers have warned about its volatility. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

But Axi's strategist Stephen Innes said: "With vaccination rollouts on turbo boost and the current lockdown abatement doing what it is supposed to do by

taming the virus spread, there is a solid chance that reported Covid-19 cases could shift close to zero in the second quarter."—AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V Kuo Lung Voy. No. (110N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V Kuo Lung Voy. No. (110N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **13-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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Thiha Thana

the throne of monarchs



Thiha Thana throne.

By Maung Tha (Archaeology)
Translated by Than Tun Aung

WHENEVER every body sees Thiha Thana throne displayed at the National Museum on Pyay Road in Dagon Township of Yangon Region, they can notice it is one of nine kinds of thrones left in the royal palace where Myanmar kings resided. With regard to Thiha Thana called Siha Sana in Pali language, Siha means lion and Asana, venue. As such, Thiha Thana means the venue based on the lion.

Myanmar dictionary defines throne called Palin derived from Pallanka in Pali which means the high seat for a noble person. Thiha Thana throne can be defined as the high seat based on lion statue for the king.

Myanmar encyclopaedia

mentions six types for thrones and eight kinds for monarchs. Six types were Aparajita throne for the Lord Buddha, Kamalasa-na or lotus throne for Brahma, Dibbasana throne for celestial beings, Raja throne for human kings, Atthakarana throne for justice and Dhammasana throne for Dhamma Kathina who preaches Dhamma Desana.

Aparajita throne is in round shape where the Lord Buddha sat, and it has four ways to climb. Raja throne was covered with Marabin wall which was installed with a door from which the king and the queen could climb on the back of the throne.

Eight kinds of the throne, nine halls of the royal palace

There were eight kinds of

throne regarding the statues under the thrones and nine halls for thrones.

Thiha Thana throne made of Yamane wood based on lion statues were purposed for the kings. Bhamaya Thana throne made of cardamom wood based on bumblebee statues was used in sleeping. Paduma Thana throne made of mango wood was used in accepting respects. Hantha Thana throne made of rock dammar wood was based on Brahminy duck statue.

Likewise, Gaza Thana throne based on elephant statues made of magnolia wood was used in accepting gifts. Thinkha Thana throne based on conch shells made of Artocarpus wood was used in judicial affairs. Miga Thana throne based on deer

statues made of fig was used in sharing merits for meritorious deeds. Mayura Thana throne based on peacock statues made of parrot wood was used in accepting the flowers for paying respects.

With regard to the locations, Thiha Thana throne took a position in the ground hall with tier roof and Zetawun hall of the court, Bhamara Thana throne in glass hall, Paduma Thana throne in west Zetawun hall, Hantha Thana throne in east Zetawun hall, Gaza Thana throne in bachelor hall, Thinkha Thana throne in Laytha hall, Miga Thana throne in south Samok hall and Mayura Thana throne in north Samok hall. Among them, Thiha Thana throne was placed in two halls.

Throne of monarch

Depending on heights of the structures, Maha throne was 16 elbows high, Majjima throne eight elbows high and Cula throne four elbows high. The throne of a monarch was decorated with statues of a lion, flying elephant, Lokanatha celestial being, peacock feather fan, a post of the door, king of celestial beings, a mythical bird, Sammadeva, the lion with a flowing mane, lotus and floral motif on Indra.

Both sides of the Ukin called uppermost part of the back of the throne and the basic structure of the throne were based on lion statues showing symbols of strong and quick acts, proudness and capability to jump and roar to nine dimensions for conquering all enemies. Both sides of the uppermost part of the back of throne were decorated with flying elephant and Lokanatha statues. Such decoration depended on a story, saying that once, the flying elephant clashed with a lion in the sky. At that time, Lokanatha celestial being sang a song by playing a beat in his toes. His pleasant song made peacefulness between two powerful animals.

Peacock feather fans kept on both sides of Ukin dedicate beautifulness of peacock tail as a symbol that although kings in successive reigns attempted to arrest beautiful peacock king which was Bodhisattha but missions failed. Moreover, both sides of Ukin were decorated with the shapes of elephant ears representing Saddan elephant which was the strongest powerful among 10 kinds of elephants. The doorpost of Ukin indicated the doorpost, which was one

of 108 characteristics of the Lord Buddha. Four statues of Catumaharaja celestial beings were kept on both up and down structures of two posts of Ukin.

Mythical birds that ate pollen of flowers danced on the day when the Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment. Such symbol was taken in the decoration of the throne for monarchs with the statue of a mythical bird. Likewise, the throne was decorated with statue of Sammadeva celestial being to be able to protect the monarchs against dangers as ogres frightened the lion with flowing mane. So, vine flowers similar to mane of the lion were kept at the throne as decoration. And, the lotus was also carved at the throne to illustrate auspicious blossoming. Moreover, the statue of a floral motif on Indra was kept at the forehead of the chariot of monarchs.

The king and the queen sat on Thiha Thana throne in the ground tier-roofed hall to accept respect paid by royal families, Saophas and counsellors of the court on the New Year period and from end to end of the Buddhist Lent. When receiving foreign diplomats and giving water of oaths to servants, the king sat on Thiha Thana throne in the ground hall. At that time, the throne was flanked by opening four white umbrellas each.

The king judged the cases in trials of the court sitting on the Thiha Thana throne in the Royal Court. If the king could not attend there, the crown prince or the prince of the royal court or any minister of the royal court judged the cases but they had to touch the throne by a hand.

Thiha Thana throne



British brought Thiha Thana throne from the Myanmar royal palace to India and displayed it at Indian Museum in Kolkata. In 1948 when Myanmar regained independence, Governor-General Lord Mountbatten of India expressed his wish to hand over the throne

to Myanmar on the occasion of celebrating Myanmar Independence Day at the residence of the Indian government in New Delhi.

Lord Mountbatten advised His Majesty George of British to return Thiha Thana throne to Myanmar people. As the king agreed with it, the British government sent back the throne to Myanmar. Lord Mountbatten handed over the throne to Myanmar in the presence of President Sao Shwe Thike of Myanmar on 12 March 1948.

Thiha Thana throne was kept at the Presidential House on Ahlon Road in Yangon and moved it to the National Museum at Jubilee Hall on 12 September 1959. Then, the throne was moved to Grindlays Bank on Pansodan Road in 1968 and opened in February 1970 for public observation.

Current National Museum (Yangon) was inaugurated on 10 September 1996 and Thiha Thana throne has been displayed at room-1 on the ground floor till today.

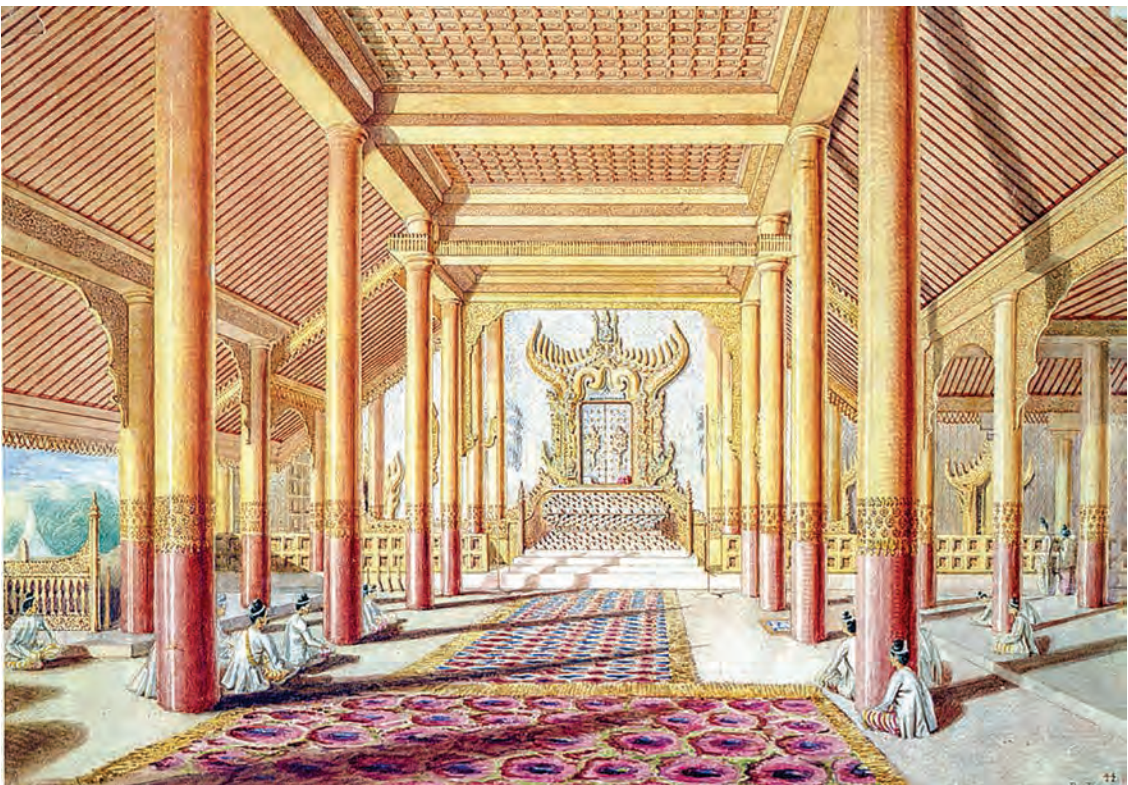
Thiha Thana throne was

built in 1856 and 1857 in the reign of King Mindon. The throne was kept to be used in judgement in the royal court in Myanansankyaw Golden Palace of Yadana-bon Royal Palace, according to Culture Journal (2005).

The book with headline of Myanmar's royal affairs written by Dr Than Tun mentioned Thiha Thana throne was 34.5 feet high from the foot to top and 5 feet and 11 inches high from the foot to the seat of king and queen. Construction of the throne cost K4,634.9 at that time.

Number of today's youths who knew measures of thrones used by Myanmar monarchs is lesser. The Thiha Thana throne, which was instance of evidence for own kingship and sovereignty of Myanmar is a cultural heritage as the inheritance of monarchical era of all people from Myanmar.

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Asian Champions League group stage matches announced

GROUP stage matches and qualifiers for the 2021 AFC Champions League, the highest level club competition organized by the Asian Football Confederation, have emerged recently, according to the AFC.

The AFC Champions League was previously held with only 32 clubs, but this year 40 clubs will compete in the tourney, AFC officials stated.

The competition is divided into East Asia and West Zone, with five groups of four teams in each zone.

Shan United, the Myanmar National League champions representing Myanmar, have qualified for the Preliminary Stage and will take on Australian club Melbourne City in the first leg on April 7.

If Shan United can get through the first round, they



A total of 40 football clubs will compete in this year's AFC Championship. PHOTO: AFC

will face Japanese club Cerezo Osaka in the play-offs again, and if they win that match, they will advance to the group stage.

Shan will face Chinese club

Shandong Lunan at the group stage. They are in Group J with Thai club Port FC and Hong Kong club Kitchi. This year's Asian Champions League will

be held from 14 April to 27 November, with the current champions South Korean club Ulsan Hyundai participating. —GNLM ■

Leicester reaping benefits of Brendan Rodgers' reign as Liverpool suffer familiar fall

LONDON—Nearly two years on from the appointment of Brendan Rodgers, Leicester are again threatening to break the glass ceiling of the English Premier League's traditional "top six" to reach the riches and prestige of the Champions League next season.

The third-placed Foxes lead defending champions Liverpool by three points ahead of Saturday's (Feb 13) crucial meeting between the sides at the King Power stadium. Rodgers can sympathise from personal experience with Jurgen Klopp's struggles to halt a rapid slide in standards at Liverpool.

The Northern Irishman was sacked in October 2015, just over a year after he came within three games of ending the Reds' long wait for a league title.

Klopp succeeded where Rodgers failed, romping to the title last season. However, the German has suffered a similar fall due to the loss of a talismanic presence on the field.

Despite the presence of Steven Gerrard as captain, it was Luis Suarez who was the inspiration of Liverpool's title challenge in 2013-14. Once the Uruguayan departed for Barcelona, they plunged to sixth the following season. "You can always think we could have been better or done things differently but it was just how it evolved. —AFP ■

Chelsea into FA Cup quarter-final



Chelsea clinched a 1-0 win at Barnsley while Southampton saw off Wolves 2-0. PHOTOS: AFP

LONDON — Chelsea's impressive start to Thomas Tuchel's reign continued with a 1-0 win at Barnsley to move into the FA Cup quarter-finals on Thursday. Tuchel has won four and drawn one of his five games in charge since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard, but the Blues were lucky to escape after a lacklustre first-half display at Oakwell against the Championship side. "Not enough courage and it was too deep for a long, long time," said Tuchel. "We clearly can play better, so yes I expected more but not in terms that I am frustrated.

"If you lack a rhythm and a bit of self-confidence and you have to show on this pitch, against an opponent that takes all the risk and plays the game of his life, that is not easy. We can do better but I don't want to be too hard on the players." The much-maligned Kepa Arrizabalaga started in goal as one of 10 changes to the team that won 2-1 at Sheffield

Coronavirus, complaints and lockdown: the chaotic Australian Open

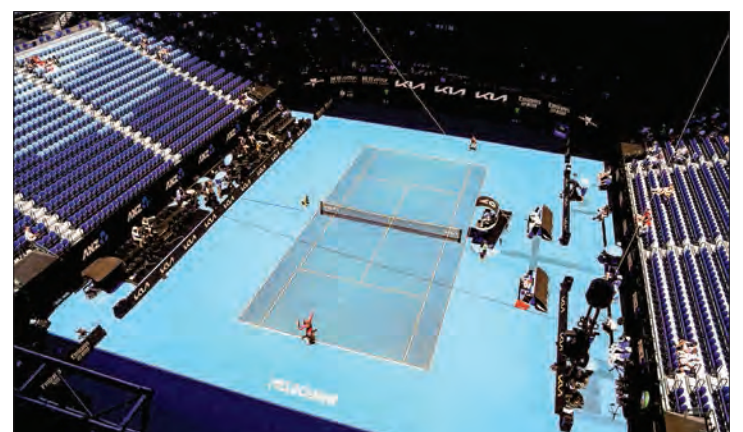
MELBOURNE—The Australian Open endured a rocky build-up during the coronavirus pandemic and was hit again Friday as Victoria state ordered a five-day lockdown from Saturday over a new cluster in Melbourne. Here, AFP Sport looks at major problems faced by the year's opening Grand Slam: **Melbourne lockdown**

Melbourne became the epicentre of the country's "second wave" after security bungles at quarantine hotels for international returnees sparked a

major outbreak last July, with new daily cases rising above 700 in August.

The city's five million residents were placed in lockdown for nearly four months under onerous restrictions.

It forced major sports such as Australian Rules football and rugby league to relocate away from Melbourne. But tennis boss Craig Tiley remained adamant the Australian Open would go ahead under biosecure conditions. —AFP ■



Authorities ordered a snap, five-day lockdown in Melbourne on Friday to contain a new coronavirus outbreak. PHOTO: AFP